

Artist Sharon Louden Brings “Community” to the Asheville Art Museum

Earlier this year, the Asheville Art Museum released a call for local artists to participate in the installation of a special exhibition. The Museum had been coordinating with artist Sharon Louden to bring her installation, titled “Community,” to Western North Carolina by installing it in the Museum’s Artworks Project Space.

Initially, the idea was to seek young artists to help with the installation, those who were just beginning their careers and eager for experience. But the response from others wanting to work with such a well-established professional was impressive. Eventually, four women ranging in age from 19–53, were selected, representing three local universities (UNC Asheville, Warren Wilson, and Western Carolina University).



Installation assistants Sarah Weaver and Crystal Moore said they heard about the project through their professors and a student organization called Art Front. When asked about the benefits of working with Louden, Sarah says, “I’ve been learning a lot about the process of ‘selling yourself’ and your art,” and adds she’s excited to see “the aesthetic come to life.”

Tonya Anderson and Shannon Hubert Waldman also heard about this opportunity through their professors. Tonya said this experience has made her see how the artistic “community” is a national network of people.

For this project, Louden is working in raw aluminum. She says she chose this medium for its reflective nature, manageability, and also the beauty of the material.

According to Louden, raw aluminum is amenable to her working technique and it can “draw in the space” of her projects. “I have a love affair with it, it has substance,” she said.

The artist says of her apprentices, “Oh, I love them,” and adds, “At least for me, it takes a village for an artist to grow and succeed.”

Social media has impacted the outreach of Louden’s work in many ways, and viewers will be encouraged to share their interactions with the exhibition through the use of smartphone photography and specific hashtags.

Louden graduated with a BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from Yale University, School of Art. Her work has been exhibited in numerous venues, including the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, the Drawing Center, Carnegie Mellon University, Birmingham Museum of Art, Weatherspoon Art Museum and the Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art.

She is also the editor of a peer-reviewed book published by Intellect Books and distributed by the University of Chicago Press titled *Living and Sustaining a Creative Life: Essays by 40 Working Artists*.